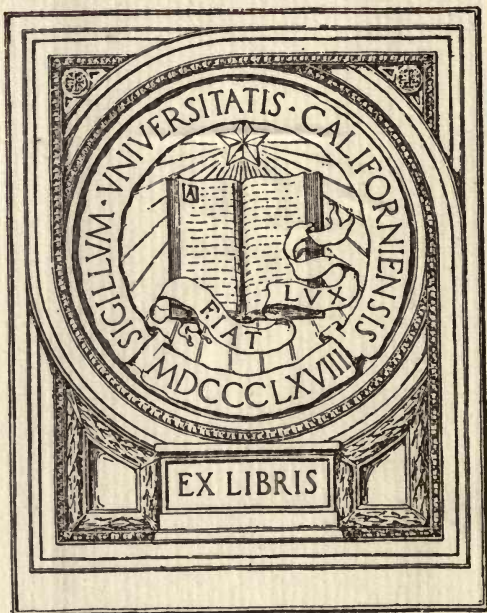


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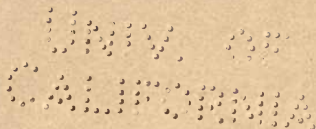


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Christmas 1914.

The Birds' Convention

By



Harriet Williams Myers
Secretary California Audubon Society

With

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A diagram of a human figure with arrows indicating the flow of 'Qi' (energy) from the head down to the feet, and from the feet up to the head, illustrating the concept of 'Qi' circulation.



Arroyo Seco, Where Birds' Convention Was Held

CHAPTER 1.

THE COMING TOGETHER.

"The meeting will please come to order." It was Mr. Mockingbird who spoke and, instantly, there was quiet among the birds.

"I think you all know why we are here assembled," began Mr. Mockingbird. "It is to hold our First Annual Convention of the birds. All our human brothers hold meetings which they call 'conventions,' and from what I hear of them, they are most enjoyable occasions. Only last night the mistress of the yard where Mrs. Mocker and I dwell and raise our families, was telling her mate of an 'affair,' as she called it, and I am sure it must have been delightful."

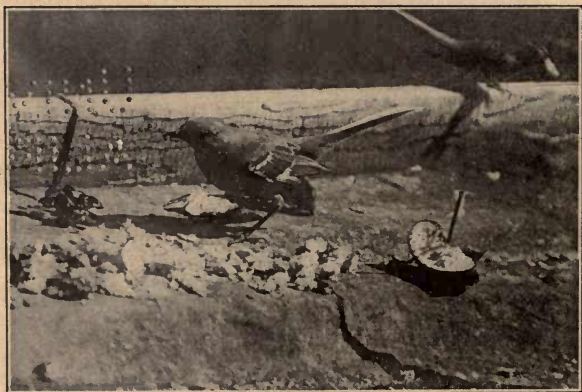
"Yes, my friends," spoke up Mrs. Mocker, "our family"—meaning the humans where she lived—"go to many things of that kind. Only a short time ago the daughter went on a moonlight picnic, a thing we would not care to do, although Mr. Mocker always sings these spring nights and would not mind an evening meeting, I suppose."

"The boy at our house often goes to 'games' as he calls them," said Mr. Jay. "He is a football player, whatever that may be, and sometimes he comes home all bruised up. I am sure that nothing of that kind will happen at our Convention," and Mr. Jay tried to look meek.

Mrs. Goldfinch whispered to her neighbor that she guessed if Mr. Jay behaved himself the others would.

"I am sure," said the Chairman, "that nothing but pleasant and friendly sports would be approved by this Convention. Is it not so, Mr. Brown Towhee?"

The quakerlike Towhee arose and said he did not approve of these warlike games. He and his family were always for peace. It was very distressing to him to think that his human brothers, who were, supposedly, so much wiser, should enjoy such warlike sports.



Mr. Mockingbird

"Those of us who have had this meeting in charge," said Mr. Mocker, "thought it would be well to have our business meeting first. When that is finished we will have our picnic-lunch, to be followed by an evening anthem by the whole assembly. Those of you who have family cares then can go home. We wish as many of you as possible to assemble for the early morning chorus at 4:30

o'clock. We want this to be the grandest chorus ever known in this section, so be sure to come."

"Our family is not much on singing," spoke up Mr. California Woodpecker, "so we would not be missed."

"Indeed you would, Mr. Woodpecker!" replied the Chairman. "It is the united effort of the whole, each adding his mite, that makes the grandest choruses. We shall expect you all to come whether you are noted singers or not. The Thrushes and Thrashers will be here to lead us, so I am sure it will be a success."

It was noticed by the assembly that he modestly forbore to speak of his own brothers who would undoubtedly do more than any of the others to swell the chorus.

"After the morning chorus," continued Chairman Mocker, "we will have breakfast, followed by an experience meeting. We are all anxious to know what has happened to our various families during the past winter. We shall also discuss many subjects that will interest the ladies, such as 'The Difficulties of Nest-building,' 'Trials of Young Mothers,' 'The Audubon Society,' etc."

"Mr. Chairman," said Mr. Hooded Oriole, "I suppose the first thing to come before the meeting is the choosing of a permanent president. Since the holding of this meeting was the idea of Mr. Mockingbird and since he has worked so hard to bring this first meeting about, I move that Mr. Harris Mockingbird (the first name indicating his home address) be made President of this Convention."

A chorus of voices seconded this motion which was put by Mr. Oriole and unanimously carried.

"Speech! Speech!" arose in a noisy hubbub from all parts of the house, or rather woods, for this was an open-air convention.

"I am not a speech-maker," said Mr. Mocker, modestly. "My best efforts have always been put forth in song. However, I am glad to thank you for this great honor which you have conferred upon me. It will be my pleasure to see that the meetings are carried on to suit the greatest number. We found it very hard to know just when to hold this meeting. Of course, to us resident birds it did not make much difference, but if we held it in the wintertime the summer visitants could not attend; and if we waited until summertime, the winter visitants would not be here. As it is, some of them have not been able to wait. The Kinglet family nearly all have been obliged to go North, although they so gladly would have attended this meeting. Some members of the Thrush family also have had to go on. Several families have delayed their going in order that they might be here today; others have arrived earlier than usual because of this assembly."

"Most of my family has gone," spoke up Mr. White-crowned Sparrow. "I was chosen a delegate to represent them, for we felt that so important a division of the Sparrow family should not go unrepresented, yet it seemed unwise for many of us to delay our trip North. Many of us spend the summer in Alaska, you know," he said with just pride.

"Oh, did you see Captain Peary when he discovered the Pole?" asked perky Jenny Wren, all in a flutter.



Mr. White-crowned Sparrow

"Well, no, my dear," replied Mr. Sparrow. "You see in the first place the pole is not in Alaska; and in the second place no bird could live in all the ice and snow that Captain Peary lived in. The summer climate of Alaska is delightful. I just wish you could visit us some time."

Jenny Wren looked crestfallen after this explanation, and several were disappointed to think Mr. Sparrow could not tell of a personal encounter with the great explorer.

"As I spent last summer in Alaska," continued Mr. White-crowned Sparrow, "I felt willing to summer farther South, so did not need to start so early."

"And I have remained to represent my family and accompany my cousin on his Northern trip," said handsome Mr. Golden-crowned Sparrow.

"I, also, have delayed my going," said Mr. Audubon Warbler, as he flitted from twig to twig.

"I believe he stayed just to show us how handsome he is in his spring suit," whispered Mrs. Wren to her neighbor. "I do not blame him one mite," she added, as she glanced from her own modest garb to that of the gay little warbler. He was, indeed, a beauty with his yellow spots on crown, rump, throat, and each side of breast. The black patches on his breast and his bluedrab back also added to his charming looks.

"Well, he hasn't much of a voice if he is so handsome," spoke up one of the Mocker family who heard the comment. "He is not half as good a singer as your husband, Mrs. Wren."

"Oh, don't you think so?" asked Mr. Wren eagerly. "I'm glad that you like my voice, for I do enjoy singing, but I have always wished that I might have some bright color about me, if it were only a few feathers."

"Better be content with what Nature has given you, my dear," said old Mrs. Blackbird. "You ought to be thankful that you have no bright plumage to make all the ladies wish they had you for their hats, and render you an easy mark for bad boys and plume-hunters. I have always been thankful that I was ugly, although, to be sure, that has not saved our family from being made into pot pies."

"Shee-ee!" came from several neighbors, and the two stopped their talk and gave attention to the speaker.



Mrs. Hummer

"I feel," Mr. Mocker was saying, "that there should be a number of committees appointed to look after the affairs of next year's meeting. We shall need a committee on arrangements whose duty it will be to select a suitable place for us to gather and who will attend to all arrangements. A refreshment committee also will be needed to see that there is an abundant supply of suitable food at hand. I—"

"Mr. President," interrupted Mr. Thrasher, "I suggest that you combine these two committees, appointing five to secure a suitable location, keeping our victualing needs in mind."

"That is a good idea, Mr. Thrasher, and if there is no objection, I will appoint such a committee."

There being no objection the Chairman proceeded: "I think I had better place on this committee three resident birds who are familiar with all suitable localities, and two ladies, the fair sex knowing best where the juicy tidbits are to be found. I will name Mr. Thrasher, Mr. Flicker, Mr. Wren, Mrs. Swallow and Mrs. Bushtit. I should like this committee to be ready to report at the end of the Convention."

"I think I had better be excused from this committee, Mr. President," spoke up Mrs. Bushtit, "for I have a nest full of eggs that need my almost constant attention. I slipped away only for a few minutes and must hurry right back. Mr. Bushtit, you know, never broods the eggs," explained the tiny gray bird in apology.

"We do not like to excuse you, Mrs. Bushtit, because you are so well versed in the best foraging places in these parts."

"I should be only too glad to help but family duties must come first, Mr. President."

"I think," said Mr. Thrasher, as he rose from his seat on the ground, "that if Mrs. Bushtit will meet with us once and give us the benefit of her knowledge we can excuse her from further work on the committee."

"Will you accept on these conditions, Mrs. Bushtit?" asked the President.

Mrs. Bushtit accepting, the President proceeded with the appointment of other committees. On the program committee were placed Mr. Meadowlark, Mrs. Long T. Chat, Mr. W. Bluebird, Mr. Russet B. Thrush and Mr. H. Finch. After due discussion, it was decided that the press committee, whose business it was to see that all the birds knew of this Convention, consisted of one summer visitor, one winter visitor, one resident bird, and one migrant, each bird to spread the news in his locality wherever he spent his time. The Chairman then announced, "I will place on this committee Mr. Whitecrowned Sparrow to represent the winter visitors. Mr. Sparrow, we will expect you to take North with you the notice of our next meeting. Mr. Bullock Oriole, we wish you to take a like message South when you leave us in the fall. Mr. W. Tanager, you will please take this message North with you now, and South when you go next fall. To represent those of us who are always here I will place Mr. A. Goldfinch. Of course all of those who are present will tell every bird we meet during the coming year about this present meeting and urge all to come next year."

"Buzz, buzz, buzz," came from the back of the audience and a voice that seemed loud for so tiny a feathered mite, said: "Ought we not to have badges, Mr. President? One of my little friends had on a bright red one the other day. I might not have known about it but I thought it was a flower and flew right up to it before I saw that it

was not," and Mr. Hummingbird held himself poised motionless in the air, save for his tiny wings, which he beat rapidly to support his body. The



*Mrs. Anna Hummingbird Who Built Her Nest on
Two Peaches*

clumsy Bluejay, watching, remarked to his neighbor that he wished he could do that. Mr. Sparrow-Hawk whispered back that it was not so hard as it looked. He could do it and often did when sighting prey.

"I know, Mr. Hummer," said the President, "that people often wear badges but I hardly see how we could wear them. What does the Convention think?"

"I hardly think we could wear a ribbon badge; it would be so much in the way as we foraged among the trees and grass," said Mrs. Plain Titmouse.

"And surely we could not fasten a button to our feathers," said Mr. Blackbird.



Mr. Brewer Blackbird

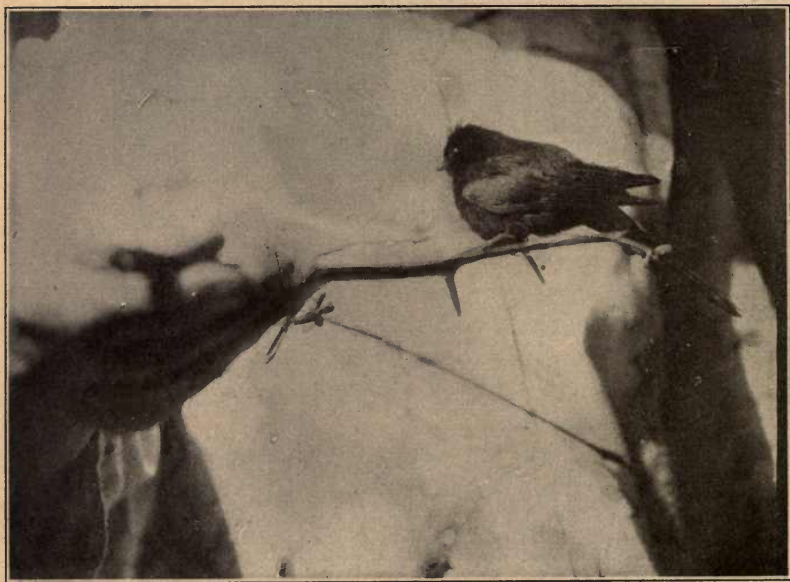
"I would suggest," said Mrs. Phainopepla, sentimentally, "that it be the duty of all birds attending this Convention to keep themselves supplied with a fresh flower which they can tie about their necks."

"We might adopt a Convention flower," came from the audience.

"I should like the poppy," spoke up shiny Mr. Blackbird, thinking, no doubt, how beautiful a yellow flower would look against his black coat. The tiny hummingbird brought a laugh to the assembly by saying he hardly saw how he could manage a poppy. This caused the President to say that he thought the idea of twining a flower about their necks a very good one, and he suggested that as many as

could do so, should comply with this request. However, he did not think that it should be compulsory.

As it was getting late, and there was some uneasiness in the audience, the President declared the meeting adjourned for supper. A great hubbub immediately arose as the members moved about greeting each other and making arrangements for their evening meal.



Mr. Phainopepla

CHAPTER II.

THE EVENING MEAL.

There was a general shifting around and getting together of families, while everybody chattered or sang as they found suitable eating places. The Goldfinch family drew together in friendly comradeship and opened their lunches which consisted of seeds.

"I was not sure that we would find any seeds near here," explained Mrs. Goldfinch, as she passed her basket around. You know our family does not care much for insects. We are almost vegetarians."

"We, too, are fond of seeds," spoke up Mr. Linnet," although few people seem to realize it, and we are sentenced by law and even denied protection because sometimes we take a little fruit."

"It is an awful thing to think we are different from all the other birds and are not considered good citizens," and with a leap Mrs. Linnet wiped a tear from her eye.

"And to think that all through the winter months Linnets are doing so much good, eating the seeds of noxious weeds," spoke up her cousin in her defence.

"Mamma, I'm hungry," cried a small gray linnet.

"Be patient, my daughter; you will have something soon. They do not care for seeds, yet," said the fond mamma, turning to Mrs. Goldfinch, "and so I brought some of the nice bread-crumbs which the lady at our house keeps out for us."

"I do not care for bread-crumbs," said Mrs. Goldfinch. "I consider the grain in its natural state much more nutritious."



Mrs. Linnet's Babies at the Window-shelf

"We all like them," replied Mrs. Linnet. "It has been such a help for the babies. As soon as they could fly we took them to the window-shelf and taught them to help themselves to the soft bread. The little dears are so fond of it." The begging for bread which followed this announcement proved the truth of the mother's statement.

The Phainopepla family had brought berries; some, those of the pepper tree; others, the blue berries of the deadly nightshade; and still others, elder-berries.

"We find these nightshades very nutritious," explained Mrs. Phainopepla. "Papa and I are very fond of them. Of course, we like insects, too, and no doubt can find some here for dessert."

"How handsome Mr. Phainopepla is," said Mrs. Brown Towhee, as she glanced from her demure, somber mate to the handsome blackbird, with his jaunty crest. "They say, too, that he is as good as he is handsome. A very unusual combination, I am sure. Just to think he builds most of the nest himself and will hardly allow Mrs. Phainopepla to help at all."

"My dear, you know I always want to help you with the nest building," said Mr. Brown Towhee in an aggrieved tone.

"I know you do, husband, but I prefer to do it myself. If you want a thing well done, do it yourself, I say."

"Not very complimentary," said her good-natured spouse, with a knowing wink to his cousin, Mr. Spurred Towhee.

The Cedar Waxwing family were seated together in their usual gregarious way not far from their distinguished cousins, the Phainopeplas. They, too, were eating berries, but they were mostly the red berries of the pepper-tree. As they ate they discussed the relative merits of the Mountain-ash berries and the fruit of the pepper-tree.

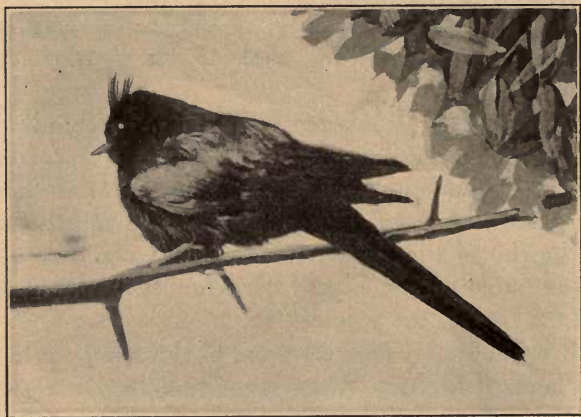
"For my part I am very fond of these pepper berries," said old Mr. Waxwing, "and they are said to be excellent for the digestion. To be sure they have not the delicate flavor of the Mountain-ash berries, but I like them best."

"I am true to my early love," announced Mrs. Waxwing. "I like Mountain-ash berries best, indigestion or no."

"How do you know so much about the Mountain-ash berries, Grandma, dear?" asked a young bird. "I have never seen any of them."

"I suppose you have not, my pet; but you see Uncle and I once lived in the East."

"Oh, do tell us about it," cried several of the younger birds who had not heard the story. The elders exchanged knowing glances, for to them the story was an old and tiresome one. Grandma Wax-wing, however, never neglected to tell the wonderful tale when she had a listener and prepared now with as much zest and enthusiasm as if she had never told it before.



One of the Phainopeplas

"You see," she began, "something happened to our parents when we were very young, and a kind lady adopted us. She dearly loved birds and knew

just how to care for us, which most mortals do not, and so we lived and learned to love our benefactress very much, indeed. We were so tame and knew so little about taking care of ourselves that our mistress did not dare let us out, even when we were grown, and when she moved West we were brought in a cage all the way. It was fall when we reached California and all winter long it was so nice and warm that we lived out of doors in a big cage built for us. Often large flocks of our relatives would come to eat in the pepper-trees that grew above our cage. At first we were afraid of them, but gradually, we lost all fear and became quite well acquainted. They used to light on the cage and tell us how nice it was to be able to fly just where you pleased. As Spring approached they told of the trip North that they would soon take and begged us to join them. I did not think that it would be right to leave our dear mistress, but as Spring advanced, I did have a longing to get out and try my wings in real flight. It was spring-fever, I guess; that is what Mistress called it, anyway. To make me more uneasy, one of the flock of birds took a special fancy to me. He was a beautiful bird and he used to bring me berries and feed them to me through the bars of the cage. Finally, brother and I became so uneasy that Mistress told her mate that she thought she ought to let us out. She said that it was such a mild climate that she believed we would get along all right and she was sure Nature was calling us. So, one day, she left the cage open and the flock of birds, my lover among them, begged so hard, that we joined

them. Mistress cried when she saw us go and we felt so sorry to leave her that we went back twice and lighted on her shoulder. Several times after that, also, we left the flock and went to her, and she was so pleased and called us 'her darlings' and said she hated so to lose us, but knew it was best for us to go. At first it seemed so queer for us to be with a flock of our kind flying about. There were so many new things for us to see that it was a constant delight. We learned, too, that there were dangers to be encountered and that we must look out for cats, and boys with sling-shots, and men with guns. Of course, we are protected by law in this State, but in some places there is no one to see that the law is enforced and we have to look out. One reason that we like to come here is because there is an Audubon Society near by and members will not let any one hurt us. We feel so safe in this locality. Well, finally, it was time to go North, and we all went together. We flew to our old home for a last farewell. Our Mistress was in the house, and we saw her through the window. She looked so sweet and pretty that I was almost tempted to go back and stay with her, but when I looked at my beautiful lover, I decided to follow him. That is all of the story, my dears."

"That was fine," said one.

"Did you see that lady when you came back the next spring?" asked another.

"Yes, the first thing brother and I did when we returned South the next winter was to return to our old home. It was a beautiful day, and there sat our

dear Mistress in the yard holding such a dear little baby. I longed to go and tell her that I had three little dears of my own. The babies were with us and



Mrs. California Towhee

I wanted to take them to her, but they were shy and would not go. You know children never will show off when you want them to. Just as soon as Mistress heard us, she looked up and exclaimed: 'Oh, look, baby dear, the Cedar Birds are back! I wonder if Fluffy and Bright-eyes are in that flock?' and she gave the call she used to have for us. It seemed so natural to brother and me that we both flew out from the flock before we realized what we were doing and circled about near her. She was so delighted and cried: 'You darling birds! I am so glad that you are safe and happy. I am just sure that those were my birds,' I heard her say to the baby,

as our flock flew away. Some one else was in the house when we returned another year, so I suppose Mistress had moved somewhere else. I am always on the lookout for her, but I fear I shall not see her again."

"You were never sorry that you left her, were you, Grandma?" asked one of the birds.

"No, indeed. A bird's place is in the open as Nature intended."



Master Grosbeak

CHAPTER III.

A FRIENDLY DISCUSSION.

The Thrasher family had not brought any lunch and forthwith set about thrashing among the dead leaves beneath the trees with their long, crooked bills.

"We were sure that we could find enough grubs for our supper," said one of the gentlemen, "and they are so much better when fresh. They shrivel and lose their delicious flavor when kept long."

"I suppose you never thought of the noise you would make with all your digging," said Mr. Jay, saucily.

"I am sure we do not mind it in the least," said several of the birds hurriedly, to assure Mrs. Thrasher, who had at once stopped her work.

"I never thought of its disturbing anybody," she said sorrowfully. "Come, children, we can just as well go to another tree," and away she flew, followed by three promising young ones, who were as large as herself and looked just like her.

"I think it was a shame for Mr. Jay to say anything to lovely Mrs. Thrasher," said Mrs. Black Phoebe. "She is so sweet and quiet when not thrashing among the leaves, and she would not have been noticed above the din we are making. It is a shame to hurt her feelings."

"What a beautiful voice Mr. Thrasher has," said Mrs. Western Flycatcher. "You know I am not a resident here and only pass through these parts

while traveling, and though the fame of his voice has reached me in my distant home, I never happened to hear him until this spring."

"Can that be possible?" answered his cousin, Mrs. Wood Pewee. "I nest in a tree above his favorite foraging ground and am often put to sleep by his sweet voice. I suppose I appreciate it the more because Mr. Pewee and I are not singers. None of our family are."

"That is a thing I have always neglected," spoke up Mr. Arkansas Kingbird. "Mrs. Kingbird and I try hard enough to be musical, but with little success, I fear."

"I should say so," whispered Mr. Grosbeak, an authority on musical matters. "Such a noise as the



Little Miss Grosbeak

Kingbirds make. They are very devoted to each other, and want everyone to know it; so they keep up a continuous chattering. I did not know before that they were trying to sing!" and handsome Mr. Grosbeak chuckled at the idea.

"Mrs. Vireo and I always get our home as far away as possible from Mr. and Mrs. Kingbird just on that account," said dainty Mr. Warbling Vireo.

"I should think you would, Mr. Vireo," replied Mr. Grosbeak. "Your family are real singers."

"Indeed, you are!" said Mrs. Summer Warbler, joining in the conversation. "I always envy you your ability to sing. I get so tired of my monotonous *ci-ci-ci*."

"Well, Mrs. Summer Warbler," replied Mr. Vireo, "if I were as handsome as you are I should not care whether I sang or not," and the modest-plumaged gray bird cast longing eyes upon the beautiful yellow one near by.

"I suppose," replied Mr. Warbler, "that there are compensations in Nature. Those who have the brightest, most beautiful plumage do not have the sweetest voices, and those of us who have the sweetest voices lack the bright plumage."

"I have often thought of that," said Mr. Vireo. "However, there are exceptions, of course. I think the Grosbeak family might come under that head since they are bright-plumaged and exceptional singers, also."

"Many bright plumaged birds have sweet songs," spoke up a jolly little Chickadee.

"Indeed they do!" said Mr. Mocker, entering into the discussion; "but few of them are really noted singers like the Nightingales, Thrashers, Thrushes, and members of my own immediate family."



The Shrike Twins

What promised to be a most interesting discussion was cut short by the passing overhead of Mr. Sharpshinned Hawk. Instantly the smaller birds became as rigid as statues so that they would not attract Mr. Hawk's attention, while the Policeman Blackbirds and Kingbirds set off to chase the intruder. Soon he was ducking and dodging to escape the blows from their bills, which they were using to good advantage. The birds of the Convention, feeling that all danger was passed, set up their cheerful chatter again, continuing their evening meal and their friendly intercourse. The Jays for their meal ate walnuts which they had brought from their home

trees. Some of them had acorns from the oak trees and others ate beans from the castor-oil bean trees. These they wedged into a crack or against some firm substance and pounded into bits with their strong bills.

"How powerful Mr. Jay is," said Mr. Cliff Swallow, admiringly. "Perhaps it would be better for him if he were not so able to crack nuts," said one of the party. "You know it is because of his fondness for gathering almonds that he is not given protection."

"Well, for my part, I would be glad if he would confine himself to taking nuts and not sometimes sample birds' eggs," said Mrs. Western Gnatcatcher.

"Now, my dear," spoke up Mr. Gnatcatcher, "You know we have never really seen Mr. Jay taking any eggs, and it is best not to accuse him when we are not sure."

"Well, I suppose not, but I do not like him anyway," and the lady darted out after a tempting gnat that came her way.

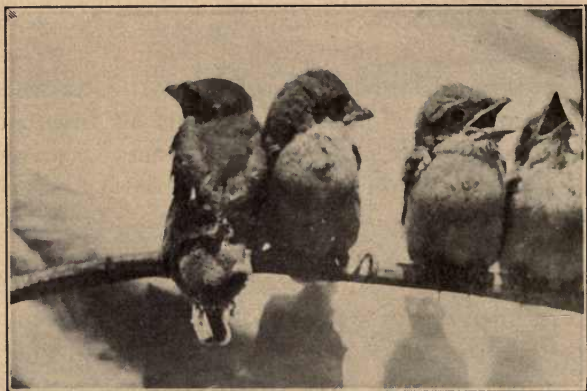
Soon after this, Mr. Shrike electrified the company by dropping from a high post on which he was perched into the grass below and returning with a large Jerusalem cricket, or potato bug.

"Wee-e!" cried a number of small birds, "what an awful creature! How dare Mr. Shrike touch it?"

"Isn't he brave though!" said a tiny Bushtit.

"How can he touch the horrid thing?" queried Mrs. Costa Hummer. Such a repulsive creature," and she buzzed about above the heads of the others in great excitement.

The Shrike, paying no attention to all this hubbub, placed one foot on the dead insect and with his



Mrs. Shrike's Happy Family

hooked bill tore it into bits, which he ate with evident relish.

"Did you know, whispered Mrs. Blackbird to Mrs. Varied Thrush, "that Mr. Shrike is a very fine singer?"

"No, indeed! I thought he gave only a most uncanny call. Can he really sing?"

"Yes, he has quite a musical little song. It seems queer to think of its coming from such a hooked bill."

The California Woodpecker family, like the Jays, were eating acorns. These they had brought from a near-by tree where they had them stored; each nut tightly fitting into a snug hole which they had chiseled out for it and into which they had pounded

it with their strong beaks. "Carpenter birds" they were rightly called by their companions. Occasionally one of the large clumsy birds would fly out from the crowd and come back with a tiny insect added to his portion of nuts, for these birds are also, sometimes, flycatchers.

Mr. and Mrs. Red-shafted Flicker were intent upon eating ants from burrows in the ground which they had hunted out. It seemed queer work for so large birds, but it was their choice.



The Hummingbird Twins

"Did you know that sometimes Mr. Flicker eats as many as 3000 ants at a time?" said Mrs. Titmouse to her cousin, Mrs. Wrentit.

"Indeed, no! Can it be possible?" exclaimed that birdie.

"Yes," continued Mrs. Titmouse, "I heard a teacher reading that to her pupils one day as I foraged in a tree near the window of a schoolhouse."

"Isn't it strange," spoke up Mr. Robin, "that in the East the Flicker family have yellow under their wings and tail while in the West they have red?"

"Well, I should say so!" exclaimed several birds.

"The Flickers are very handsome, but they are not singers," said Mrs. Bluebird. "I remember once that my babies were nearly scared into hysterics by their call. Such a time as I had quieting the little dears."

Mr. and Mrs. Kingfisher, who had made a special effort to be present at this first convention, excused themselves to the President and flew to the near-by stream for their meal. "It was hardly possible to bring enough fish for our lunch," explained Mr. Kingfisher. "You know fish to be really good must be fresh. Mrs. Kingfisher and I are very particular about our food. In this day of so much ptomaine poisoning one can not be too careful."

"No, indeed," agreed Mr. Mocker. "We hope that you will come back for the evening anthem."

"Thank you," replied Mrs. Kingfisher. "It will hardly be worth while. You know we are not a musical family. Our presence would only produce discord."

When Mr. Mocker politely demurred, Mrs. Kingfisher promised that they would return for the morning chorus, and so with farewells to all the birds, they flew away.

"There is a pretty legend connected with the Kingfisher family," said Mr. Dove.

"Oh, what is it," cried several of the younger birds. "We never heard it."



Mr. Blackbird's Son

"It is said that originally all the members of this family were clothed in dull colored plumage, but the Kingfisher that was liberated from Noah's Ark flew toward the setting sun. On its back was reflected the blue sky, while its breast was scorched by the rays of the heat-giving orb."

"Humph! I don't believe that," said prosaic Mr. Blackbird. "I never was much of a believer in legends, anyhow."

"It is a very pretty story, whether it is true or not," said Mrs. W. Tanager.

"Perhaps Mr. Dove can tell us as to its authenticity, since his family played so important a part in the history of the Ark," suggested Mr. Mocker.

"No, I am afraid that I cannot verify the story," replied Mr. Dove. It is one of the legends which has been handed down in our family from the beginning of time and none of us have ever questioned its truth. Had we done so, I suppose our Forefather who was liberated from the Ark could have given us the correct information."

"Well, I'm going to ask Mr. Kingfisher about it when I see him next," said Mr. Blackbird, not quite satisfied.

CHAPTER IV.

BIRD CHORUSES.

Mr. Mockingbird, seeing that all the birds had finished their evening meal and were beginning to look about for night quarters, called the Assembly together for the "Retiring Anthem."

"I would like every one to sing," he announced, "and, remember, this will close the first day of our annual Convention. Tomorrow morning we wish you all to awaken early and be ready to join in the grand 'Daybreak Chorus.' We will close promptly at noon, so that those of you who stayed over for this meeting will be no longer delayed. We want you to come another year so we'll do our best to please you. Our Retiring Anthem tonight opens with a song. Mr. Russet-backed Thrush, will you please lead us?"

In answer, the liquid notes of the Thrush rang clear and loud on the still twilight air, but no sooner had he opened up his theme than his voice was drowned by the many who joined in. The mortals living nearby marvelled at this unusual music of birds.

"Listen to that wonderful music, mother dear," said one of them. "Does it not take you back to old New England?"

"Hark, I hear a Thrush!" in awed tones, whispered the mother, who was able to discern the voice of her favorite even among the many others. Together, motionless, they listened to the liquid notes of that marvelous singer as they floated up to them.

The chorus was not long, for the twilight hours were short, and most of the members of the Convention ready for sleep. A few individuals, however, kept up the music far into the night. The Mockers were the principal singers, but Mr. Long-tailed Chat also kept up his loud whistling to the mystification of some of his human listeners. Now he whistled exactly like a man calling a dog, the imitation being so perfect that those who knew marvelled that a bird could make such a human call; now it was a dog answering, with a hoarse bark, a call even more wonderful than the whistle; now it was a more bird-like chatter, or call.

With the coming of daylight the Daybreak Chorus was rendered with surprising vigor. In melodious waves it rolled, increasing in volume as the various songsters awoke and added their voices.

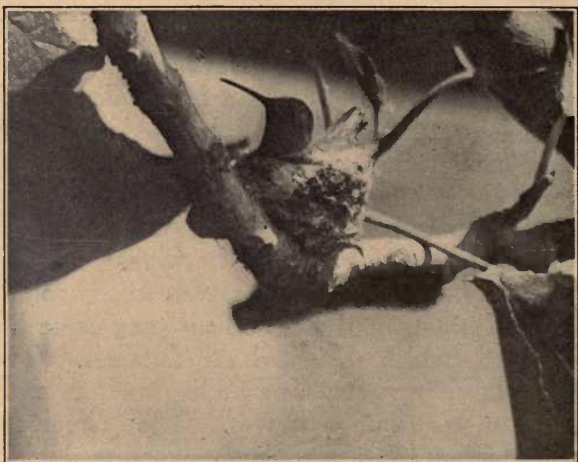


Mrs. Arkansas Goldfinch and Family

Awakened from their slumbers were many human beings. Some grumbled to be so aroused and wished the birds were voiceless; others, filled with delight at this glorious outburst, lay and drank it in, forgetting that there was such a thing as sleep.

Mr. Linnet was pouring forth his soul in wild ecstasy, the refrain bubbling forth in an unceasing strain which was taken up and borne along by his brother Linnets. The jolly little Goldfinches were singing "Sweet, Sweet," to their mates who answered "Dear, Dear," thereby causing the males to sing forth in joyous babbling. "It is just good to be alive," they seemed to say. The Wrens, not to be out-done by the happy Finches, were nearly splitting their tiny throats, and a melodious song came bubbling forth which delighted all listeners. Their cousins, the Thrashers, were adding their mite, and a glorious contribution it was. The Vireos sang loud melodious songs, stopping now and again, however, to hear those birds whom they had never before heard sing, but whose fame had reached them. The Ruby-crowned Kinglets, who had remained, were so engrossed with the other performers that for a time they forgot to sing, but, suddenly, one little midget opened his tiny bill and the loud harmonious song that came forth made more than one bird stop and listen. "Exquisite!" exclaimed Mr. Grosbeak. "I had no idea the Kinglet family had such fine voices. You see they usually go North before I arrive and so I have never heard them before. How marvelous that so loud a song can come from so tiny a bird." As if to show that size did

not count, Mr. Anna Hummer began his squeaky, wheezy song. "Teedle, teedle, teedle, Chirrup, chirrup, chirrup," he sang, again and again, making some of the large birds smile in amusement.



Mrs. Hummingbird

Mr. B. Oriole was singing his short, sweet song, while his cousin, Mr. Hooded Oriole, was trying to be heard, but so low and whisper-like was his warble, that he made little impression. Mr. California Woodpecker cackled, "Ja-cab, Ja-cab" in his loud voice, varying this call by a purring, guttural one. The Jays joined in with their unpleasant call, which did not add to the musical part of the performance. The Kingfishers true to their word, had returned for the morning chorus, but were considerate

enough not to do much "singing." Only an occasional hard rattling noise told of their presence. The Meadowlarks were singing their musical songs, proclaiming in no uncertain way, the coming of daylight. Theirs was a glorious song, and because of its carrying qualities, was heard by many a listening mortal.

Phoebes and Wood-Pewees, anxious to contribute their share, were doing their best, which, however, was only a single plaintive note. Song-Sparrows sang hilariously, doing much to make this Daybreak Chorus a success. Phainopeplas sang their weak little song, Cedar Waxwings "sighed" from the tree-tops where they were congregated, Spurred Towhees trilled and "skee-ed" from the underbrush, in short, all did their very best to make a glorious chorus. Roundelay after roundelay, pealed forth from countless throats until the sun had peeped forth from his nightly couch and with his cheerful face had driven away the shadows. Not till then did the chorus cease. With the coming of the sun the hungry birds fell to eating. Indeed, they had earned their breakfasts.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRIALS OF NEST-BUILDING.

Promptly at eight o'clock Mr. Mockingbird called the Convention to order for the morning session. Rather early it would have seemed to their human brothers, but since the birds had awakened so early, all had had their breakfasts, and there being no dishes to wash, or houses to put in order, they were ready for business.

"Now," began Mr. Mocker, "we are anxious to hear from all the families in order to know how you have fared during the past year. Undoubtedly, some of you have met with sorrows; others, I am sure, will have nothing but joys to report. In order to hear from all you must speak rapidly, leaving out that which will not be of especial interest."

Scarcely had he ceased speaking when there arose a great hubbub from those assembled, each being anxious to tell his, or her, story.

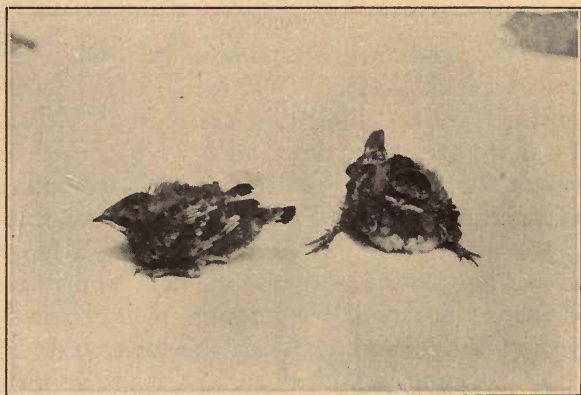
"One at a time, please," laughed the Chairman. "Mrs. Swallow, we will be glad to hear from you."

Instantly there was quiet, each bird wishing to hear Mrs. Swallow's story.

"Well," began Mrs. Cliff Swallow, "my story is not altogether a pleasant one. You know we go South every fall. We had a very nice time during the past winter and spring. The people down South like our family and try to be good to us because we eat so many of the cotton-boll weevils that destroy the cotton crop. We are fond of these weevils and catch them as they fly about the cotton, thus

saving the crop for more than one planter. But when we come North to nest we are not always treated so well. Some people object to our building our nests under the eaves of their buildings and drive us away. That is not so bad because we can try somewhere else but some people are so cruel as to let us build our nests, and then, when our babies are small, they tear down our homes, killing very many of our young and leaving others to be eaten by prowling cats. It is so discouraging," and the little Swallow sighed.

"Sometimes when we nest on school-houses they even allow the children to kill us," spoke up a member of the family. "Most school-houses do not have



Mrs. Cliff-swallow's Babies

screens, and the flies bother the children so they can not study, and yet they will not let us stay and eat the flies," said a third.

"The flies carry disease, too," said another.

"Some people like us," spoke up Mrs. Cliff-Swallow. "I know a lady who was very kind to one of our nestlings that had fallen from the nest and been picked up by a passing child. This lady who cared for Birdikin made food for him of the yolk of a hard-boiled egg and a potato mashed together."

"What a queer food."

"Yes, it sounds queer, but Birdikin said it tasted very good. Then the whole family caught flies for him and it was a great deal of work because they had so few flies. They searched in the yard and even went to the neighbors to beg flies."

"I wish I had found that place to build," said one of the Swallows, who had had such a time trying to build her nest.

"I know just how to sympathize with you," spoke up Mrs. Black Phoebe. "It seemed as if I never should get my nest built this last spring. I picked out a place over a window which we had used successfully the year before to raise our three broods in, and began carrying mud and fiber for a new nest. I had worked a couple of days on it when a family, who had just moved in, turned the hose on my house and knocked it down. They gave as their excuse that they had just painted the house and we would make it dirty. The lady said also that there were plenty of trees for us to build in, which was true, only we Phobes always build a mud nest which we fasten onto some building. We do not care for trees. Well, I tried again and again, working hard, and each time they tore it down so that, finally, I had

to give it up and go across the street where nicer people lived."

"I suppose the people who tore down your nest did not know how much good you do by eating flies, mosquitoes, moths, etc.?" said Mrs. Bushtit.

"Oh, I presume not," replied Mrs. Phoebe, resignedly. "Some people are so ignorant in regard to the value of our work and too selfish to care what becomes of us."

"We have such a nice nesting place," spoke up another Mrs. Phoebe. "We have used the same props under the eaves for several years and no one molests us. We raised three broods of beautiful children this year," and Mrs. Phoebe flirted her tail in satisfaction.

"Well, I had a very dreadful time," spoke up tiny Mrs. Costa Hummingbird. "You know I do all the nest-building in our family, and it is no small matter to gather down and spiders' webs enough for a nice nest."

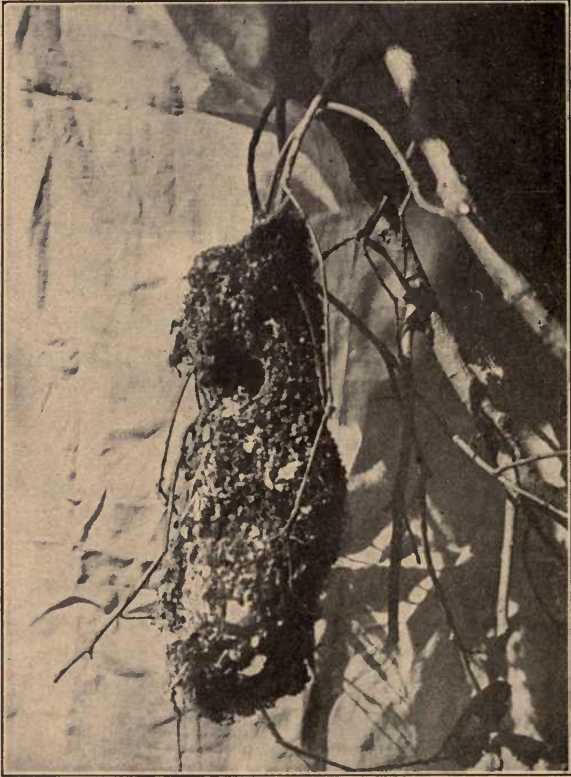
"I should say not," interrupted Mrs. Jay. "How you ever build such a dear little nest is more than I can see."

"Of course I could never construct a big one like yours, Mrs. Jay. It would break my back to carry some of the big sticks you use. Well, I got my nest all built and fastened to a mulberry leaf in such a nice shady yard. I even had my two eggs laid, and they were just about to hatch, when a great big boy, who was picking the ripe mulberries, spied me. I fairly held my breath when he found me and, as it proved, I had good reason to be scared, for he took

out his knife and cut off the little twig that held my nest."

"Oh, you poor dear!" exclaimed sympathetic Mrs. Phoebe.

"We had a similar experience," said Mr. Bush-tit.



Mrs. Bushtit's Nest

"Do tell us about it," came from several.

"We used the same nest that we had last year," began Mr. Bushtit. "It was hung in a live-oak tree that grew in a city lot, which was vacant, and had proved such a good place the year before that we felt we were safe. We worked about a month, re-lining the old nest and getting it ready, and then Mrs. Bushtit began brooding. After two weeks of tiresome sitting, we found that the eggs were not good, and so it was necessary to cover them up with more building material, and make the nest fit for another set. Well, we had just finished it and I had laid two beautiful, creamy eggs, when one day we came to the tree to find our home entirely gone. Even the branch from which it swung was missing. A man was trimming up the tree and had taken our nest."

"What a shame, after all that work!" came from the sympathetic audience.

"Yes, I admit that it was rather discouraging. I heard a lady who had been most friendly to us telling a friend how she had tried to get the tree trimmers to leave our nest, but it did not suit their plans to do it. Of course we had to go to another tree and start all over again. That third time, however, we had no mishap and raised a family of eight, many of whom are with us today." Papa Bushtit at the mention of this fine family proudly puffed up his little round body, until he looked more like a ball than a bird.

"A bad boy took my nest, also," said Mrs. Wood Pewee. "I built in a secluded place far away from

homes, for I am just a little suspicious of mortals and prefer the quietude of the forest. But it did not save me, for after many trips of nest-building in which I had taken pains to build a fine cup-shaped nest, decorated with lichens, and had laid my eggs, a boy came along and spied me. Although my nest was on a slender limb, he managed to 'collect' it, and carried it away, despite my distress."

Mr. Mocker had listened patiently to all these recitals, but at the close of Mrs. Pewee's tale, he arose, and, after looking at the sun, said he believed they had given as much time as possible to the trials of nest building, and that after a few minutes recess, they would discuss another important matter.

CHAPTER VI.

TRIALS OF YOUNG MOTHERS.

"Now," began Mr. Mocker, after he had called the Convention to order, "we are going to take up a subject in which you should all feel interested. If, however, any of you do not care to listen to this discussion, please go quietly away so as not to disturb others. Mr. Jim Crow, will you please act as marshal and see that order prevails?"

"With pleasure, Mr. President," replied Mr. Jim Crow.

"For a short time we will consider the trials of young mothers," said the President. "I noticed that Mrs. Brown Towhee had something to tell us when



Mr. C. Towhee

we adjourned, and I am going to ask her to open the discussion with her recent experiences."

Mrs. Towhee hopped forward and stood on a stone before the assembly.

"I have had my trials, indeed, in raising a family," began Mrs. Towhee. "We prefer nesting in a garden or in the vines about the house and as the people where we live like birds, we are never molested. In fact, they are so anxious to have us about, that they keep food out for us and even put out rags for us to use in our nest building. But after our babies are hatched, we have the most dreadful time to raise them because of cats." A wave of tumult arose from all sides, for many of those present had suffered in the same way.

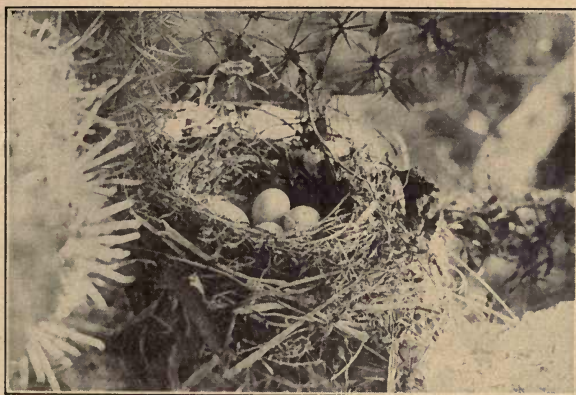
"Silence!" commanded the Chairman. "Let Mrs. Towhee finish."

"There is not much more to tell," said Mrs. Towhee. "Stray, prowling cats take most of our little ones in spite of all the pains we and our human friends take to protect them. It is most disheartening."

"I, too, had my little dears taken by cats only a short time ago," spoke up Mrs. Linnet. "I had never had so large a family before. There were six of them, and I was looking forward to the time when I could show them to all my friends, but it was not to be."

"Why, they even got my darlings when I placed the nest in a cactus plant," said another Linnet.

"I just had four darlings taken," spoke up another Mrs. Towhee. "They were in a vine that



Mrs. Linnet's Nest in the Cactus Plant

grew on the back porch and were getting so strong and handsome, when, one night, I was awakened by a fiery-eyed monster who almost caught me and who began eating my babies. Their cries brought my mistress to the porch and she scared the cat away, but she was too late. I heard her lamenting the next day because the nest was empty."

"And they climbed into the pampas-grass, where we had our nest, and took our young also," said Mrs. Song-Sparrow. "We are very fond of the pampas-grass for a nesting-site and thought the rough blades would keep away undesirable prowlers, but we had to give up using that clump and have had better luck since."

"A cat also took my family as soon as they were hatched," said Mr. Phainopepla.

"And mine, too," came from Mrs. Rufous-Crowned Sparrow.

"Well," said the Chairman, "I guess that most of us know what it means to have our families broken up by those animals they call cats. They are, undoubtedly, our worst enemies. I understand that it is the desire of many that they be licensed the same as dogs. That would keep in check the strays."

"I do hope so!" "That would be fine!" came from so many sources regardless of even bird-grammar, that the Chairman's voice was drowned.

"We are not bothered by cats," spoke up Mrs. Bushtit, "because they cannot get at our long hanging nest and our babies stay inside until they are able to care for themselves."

"You are most fortunate in having so obedient and obliging a family," said Mrs. Mocker. "My children are always so ambitious that it is hard to restrain them. They jump from the nest before they can fly and it seems as if there was a cat lurking under every bush. Then, so many people, seeing the babies on the ground, pick them up and take them home, and as most human beings do not know how to feed them, most of them die. If they would only pick them up and place them in a bush, or some safe place, where we could feed them, it would be so much better."

"Indeed it would," agreed several listeners. "I should think they might know that the parent birds were somewhere about when they see young birds."

"We had a most tragic time with snakes," spoke up Mrs. Pacific-Yellowthroat. At the urgent request of those present she told her story. "We built our nest in a clump of coarse grasses that grew

in a canyon away from human habitation and we felt quite safe from boys and cats. Of course we knew about snakes but we had never seen any about



Mrs. Towhee's Nest

and felt that this protected spot would be comparatively safe. Well, I laid four eggs and, after two weeks of patient brooding, they hatched. Mr. Yellowthroat and I were so proud of them and worked so hard to feed them. They were such cunning little dears, if I do say it as shouldn't. One day when they were nearly a week old, we came home only to find the nest empty," and Mrs. Yellowthroat wiped her eyes with her wing.

"Oh-oo!" came from tiny Mrs. Wren. "How did you know what happened to them?"

"It was easy enough to tell, for, lying across the nest just as if he owned it, was the horrid speckled monster, sleeping after his meal."

"The audacity!" came from perky Mrs. Song-sparrow.

"Was it not sad?" said Mrs. Flicker to her neighbor, Mrs. Chat.

"Indeed, yes," said that handsome lady. "I am always afraid of snakes as I build low and in a wild tangle. However, I have not as yet met with any misfortune from that source. But listen. Mrs. Spurred Towhee is speaking."

"I, also, had my babies taken by those crawling monsters. My nest was placed right on the ground under a clump of coarse grass. I laid three light blue eggs, which were speckled with brown, and brooded them two weeks, leaving only when I wanted food. Mr. Towhee was always near-by and often called to let me know where he was, but he did none of the brooding. Well, the babies were only a day old when this reptile came along and ate them. He curled up in my nest after his villainous act, too. A lady and girl came to see my little ones and they heard my cry of distress and scared the snake away with their umbrella, but they were too late to save the darlings. They felt dreadfully about it, and were sorry they had not come sooner and by their presence kept the snake away."

"You can imagine my sorrow when I returned with a juicy miller for the babies, to find Mrs. Towhee in such distress and the little ones nowhere about. We looked everywhere and called for them in hopes

the snake had not really gotten them, but of course we knew he had and so, finally, I gave up looking and ate the miller myself," said Mr. Spurred Towhee.



Mrs. Song Sparrow

"Why didn't you give it to Mrs. Towhee?" asked Miss Cedar Waxwing coquettishly.

"Well, I might have done so, but I never thought of it, my dear," answered Mr. Towhee, his red eyes twinkling at the idea.

"It seems to me that no one ever had more trouble than I," spoke up Mrs. Dove in a mournful tone. "Although we are given protection in 23 States in the Union at all times of year, there are other States where we are considered game birds and are hunted, and that when our young are still in the nest."

"I call that a perfect shame!" exclaimed several in the audience.

"I guess you would have thought it a shame if you had had your kind husband shot down before your very eyes and you had barely escaped with your life. We were carrying food for the little ones when the fatal shot rang out which killed Mr. Dove. I have always felt very thankful that I escaped to raise my children. Some of my neighbors were not so fortunate and many of their young were left to starve in the nests. One family of nestlings was taken charge of by a kind lady who said she would raise them, but others there were who cried pitifully for days and finally died of starvation."

"Is it not terrible that our human brothers will do such things?" said little Mrs. Kinglet.

"I know, Mrs. Mourning Dove," said Mr. Mocker, "that you are much persecuted, but a sentiment in your favor is growing and I hope that at our next Convention you can give a happier story."

"Our family has gone through a most nerve-racking experience this last year," said Mr. Meadowlark. "One of the men who make the laws, being ignorant of the good we do, tried to take us from the protected list, and it required a hard fight to save us."

"Well, I declare," said old Mrs. Robin. "I thought every one liked the Meadowlarks."

"Well, I believe that most people do like us," replied Mr. Lark. "The Government, you know, considers us one of the farmers' best friends and urges everyone to protect us because we eat so many bugs, worms, weevils, etc., that destroy the grain, but some

ignorant people, seeing us in the fields, think we are eating the grain when it is not half as good as the juicy bugs we find in it."

"It was a boy who did so much to help save us," said Mrs. Meadowlark. "He had watched us and knew how much good we did and he wrote his father, who was a Senator, all about us and begged him to save us. His father read the letter before the other Senators and they voted down the bill that aimed to take protection from us."



Mrs. Song-Sparrow's Nest

"Was not that splendid of him," said Mr. Jay. "I wish somebody would work that way to save me."

"And me, too," chimed in Mr. Linnet.

"So far we have had so many stories of disasters," said the Chairman, "that it would be quite a relief to hear from some of you who successfully raised your families."

"I had an unusual experience," said Mr. Gairdner Woodpecker. "We succeeded in raising our family all right."

"Do let us hear about it," said Mr. Mock.

"Mrs. Woodpecker and I selected an old sycamore tree in a city park that joins an arroyo. I suppose that we were unwise in our selection of a tree as we placed our nest only about six feet from the ground and on a limb from which a swing hung."

"But you know, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Woodpecker, "that when we dug our hole for the nest the swing was seldom used. We surely never dreamed that it was such a popular park for picnics or we would have selected another site."

"Yes, indeed," agreed her mate. "Well, we got our nest made down in this old stump of a limb and Mrs. Woodpecker laid the eggs and began brooding. Everything went nicely until the babies were hatched and then there were so many people in the park that the swing was occupied most of the time. Neither Mrs. Woodpecker nor I dared to go and feed while the swing was occupied, so that the nestlings often got very hungry. Then, too, some one in the crowd always saw our hole and immediately all the children wanted to look in and stick their

fingers down. Of course they could not see to the bottom of the nest, nor feel the babies until they got quite large and then the little dears would take hold of their fingers, thinking it was food, and how those youngsters would squeal. They all thought we were so cunning and they said it was such fun to watch as we bobbed in and out of the hole. That seemed so queer to us. There was one lady who came to watch us every day and photograph us, whatever that is. She put up a box-like thing on legs and pointed it at our hole. Mrs. Woodpecker was very much frightened, and for a long time refused to go to the nest, but finally, seeing that no harm came to me, she took courage and went, also."

"Well, how was I to know that it was not a gun?" asked Mrs. Woodpecker. "I thought perhaps it was put there on purpose to shoot me."

"So it was," laughed Mr. Chat, "but not to kill you."

"The lady was very nice," continued Mr. Woodpecker, "and got the Superintendent to take the swing down because she saw that we could not half feed our children."

"Wasn't she good!" came from several.

"I heard her tell the park men that it had been estimated that one of our cousins in the East, the Downy Woodpecker, was worth over \$500 to the orchardist, because of the good he does in taking the pupæ of the codling moth, a most injurious insect. She told them that she was sure that we were most useful because we came so often to the nest with our mouths filled to over-flowing with worms and other



Mr. Woodpecker Taking Food to His Babies

injurious insects. She felt that we were doing so much to help keep the park trees alive that the men should help us to raise our family."

"She seemed to know a lot about you," said Mrs. Robin.

"Well, she ought to. She visited us enough."

"That was just like a lady who watched our nest last year," said Mrs. Phainopepla. "She came every day and stayed and pried into our affairs. At first I was very alarmed, but when I found she meant well, I went about my affairs unmindful of her."

"I really think that she felt quite kindly to us," said Mr. Phainopepla.

"Did you finally get your children out of the hole safely?" asked Mrs. Western Bluebird.

"Yes, indeed, they came out when no picnic party was about," said Mrs. Woodpecker. "We never would have dared to have them do otherwise, for some of the boys would have tried to catch them. As it was we hastened them up high out of harm's way."

"You surely had a novel experience," said Mr. California Woodpecker. "We never take such chances with our family, but build high and away from picnic parties, if possible."

"One interesting experience Mr. Woodpecker has forgotten to tell you," said Mrs. Woodpecker. "One day when a picnic party was there and we were both away getting worms, one of the girls thought that they would help us and so dropped a crumb of bread in the hole. When Mr. Woodpecker came he found it there. Of course, the babies were too young to

feed themselves, and anyway, they would not eat bread. We realized the good intentions, but could not leave the bread to clutter up the nest and so Mr. Woodpecker took it out with him as soon as he found it. No doubt some other bird found it and enjoyed it."



Baby Goldfinch

CHAPTER VII.

EXPERIENCES.

"Now," said the President, "we want to hear from other members of the assembly. Tell us what you did last year; what experiences you had, and anything helpful or interesting. Undoubtedly there will be something by which we may profit this coming season.

"We raised our family safely last year," spoke up Mrs. Arkansas Kingbird.

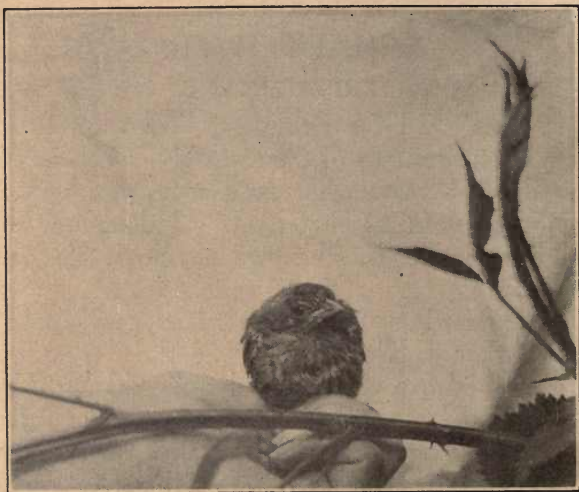
"We had five beautiful babies," said Mr. Kingbird, proudly.

"And they raised them in such a queer place," interposed Mr. Mocker. "Do tell the Convention about it, Mr. Kingbird."

"Did you think it a queer place, Mr. Mocker?" asked Mrs. Kingbird. "We thought it so ideal that we used it several seasons."

"It was on the top of a square electric light pole, between two uprights that support the crossbars which hold the wires," explained Mr. Kingbird. "We lined it with sticks, strings, and feathers and it made a very cosy nest. No cat or boy could very easily climb the pole and from this lofty outlook Mrs. Kingbird could see any possible danger."

"I should have thought that you would have feared that the babies would fall out and break their necks," said Mrs. B. Towhee, who knew from experience what a task it was to keep ambitious youngsters in the nest until they were able to keep away from cats.



Miss Towhee

"Well, Mrs. Towhee," said Mrs. Kingbird, "our children are not so forward as yours. They stay in the nest until they are fully feathered and can fly from it. The dears are nearly three weeks old before they try their wings."

"How lovely," said Mrs. Towhee. "Mine are only about nine days old when they get restless and determine to leave the nest. They have scarcely any tails and cannot fly at all."

"But they are lively hoppers, I've noticed," said Mr. Blackbird. "They run like—like gophers."

A shout went up among the birds. "You mean squirrels, don't you?" asked one.

"Well, perhaps I do," replied Mr. Blackbird. "Gophers are those things that burrow in the ground."

I guess I meant squirrels," and he joined goodnaturally in the fun with his companions.

"I had a queer experience last year," spoke up a member of the Oriole family. "It was when I was only a youngster. I got too ambitious and tried to leave the nest. A small boy, finding me on the



Mrs. Hummer's Nest in Eucalyptus Tree

ground, took me across the street to a lady who was friendly to birds. She told the boy that he should have left me on a bush near where he found me and then my parents would have fed me. She started to take me back, but there was an Oriole about who seemed interested in me, and so she left me in a safe place for him to feed. He coaxed me until I managed to get up into a pepper-tree and he came and fed me a few times and then, for some unknown reason, he stopped and no Oriole would feed me, although I cried lustily for food. The lady heard me and came out and tried to catch me so that she could give me food, but I would not let her. I got so hungry that finally I tried to eat the leaves and things about me. One tree that I got into had fruit on it, mulberry they call it, and I picked at the berries in my despair. A mean old Mocking bird came and picked me several times and drove me about, and the kind lady tried to help me, but finally I was a full grown bird and had taught myself to eat. I can tell you I was glad when I was fully able to care for myself as other birds do."

"What a time you had, my dear," said Mr. Oriole. "You have taught me a lesson, which is that we should not only feed our own nestlings but any other that begs for food. I suppose the birds that saw you, thought some one else was feeding you."

"I suppose so," answered the first speaker, "but it was hard on me."

"Does not Mrs. Oriole make a beautiful nest?" asked Mrs. Phoebe of Mrs. Kinglet, who sat near her.

"I have heard so," replied Mrs. Kinglet, "but as I do not stay in this neighborhood during the nesting season, I have never seen her nest. Do tell me about it."

"Mrs. Hooded-Oriole usually hangs her nest under a palm leaf, though sometimes she selects a tall eucalyptus tree for her home," said Mrs. Phoebe. "She usually uses the fibers of the palm leaves for her material so that it quite blends with the leaf. But the wonderful thing is the way she pushes this fiber through the leaf from the under side, then pulls it back, until she has fastened the nest in two or three places on to the leaf, for all the world as if she had a needle and thread."

"My mistress who does fine embroidery says she could not beat it," spoke up Mrs. Jenny Wren, who was listening to the conversation.

"Mrs. Oriole does most of the building," continued Mrs. Phoebe.

"She makes the whole nest of this fiber, weaving it into a deep cup which hangs in under the leaf out of harm from sun, or rain, or wind."

"It must, indeed, be beautiful," said Mrs. Kinglet.

"I call it most wonderful," spoke up Mrs. Robin. "You know my nest is made of twigs and fibers stuck together with much mud. It is not stuck on to some projection, or with only a slight support like yours, Mrs. Phoebe, nor yet under the eaves or against a bank like the Swallows, but it is in some tree-crotch, or where there is a substantial support. This hanging a nest beneath a leaf is, indeed, a mystery to me."

"What I could never understand," said Mrs. Vireo, "is why Mrs. Oriole so often leaves so many long light fibers hanging from her nest. Oftentimes they are two feet long, and, blowing about with the breeze, are sure to attract attention. She would be wiser, in my judgment, to weave the loose ends in."



Mrs. Vireo's Home

"Mrs. Vireo is a most beautiful nest-builder," whispered Mrs. Warbler to her neighbor." Her nest is a sort of cup, also, and often hangs, but there are no stray ends, you may be sure."

"Speaking of queer nests," spoke up Mr. Thrasher, "Did any of you ever see Mrs. Cactus-Wren's nest?"

"I never did," said Mrs. Vireo, "though I have heard about it."

"As their name implies, the whole family builds in the cactus," said Mrs. Thrasher. "The nests are large, bulky pouches, longer than broad, and are placed in a cactus crotch so that they lie nearly on one side. There is a hole in the smaller end where the birds go in and out. The nests are lined with feathers and are very warm, cosy affairs."

"I should think Mrs. Wren would have to be very careful not to get stuck on the cactus thorns," said Mrs. Towhee. "I believe my choice of the ground suits me best after all."

"Mr. Cactus-Wren is a cousin of yours, is he not, Mr. Thrasher?" asked one of the group.

"Yes, all the Wrens are my cousins. Even little Jennie here. You will notice that in shape, curved bill and carriage, there is a strong family resemblance. Our voices, also, proclaim us relatives."

"I had a hard time last year," said Mrs. Robin-red-breast. "I made the mistake of going into a cherry country. The cherries are delicious eating, and, of course, when we nest where they are, we eat some of them. Some people resent it, notwithstanding the fact that we eat so many insects, thus doing more good than harm. One girl in our neighborhood sat in the window with a loaded gun and shot all the robins she could see."

"How unladylike!" said one of the listeners.

"My husband was killed by her," continued Mrs. Robin, "and I had a hard time supplying the children alone. You know they eat from 50 to 75 cut-worms

a day while they are growing. Indeed I had one child that ate 165 cut-worms in one day, which was one and five-sixths times its own weight."

"Goodness, what an eater!" exclaimed one of the birds.

"I am not going to that locality next year," said Mrs. Robin, "it is not safe."

"We have a splendid place," said another Mrs. Robin. "You had better come with us. My people have quantities of cherries and they let us have all we want. They love birds and will not allow one killed. Why, the Quail families gather about their doors by hundreds. They are as tame as chickens."

"I was sure we might be of help to each other," said the Chairman, "I should think you might profit by this suggestion, Mrs. Robin."

"Indeed I shall. I will go when you do, if I may, so as to be sure and find the place," she said to her more fortunate neighbor.

"I shall be glad of your company," replied Mrs. Robin.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AUDUBON SOCIETY.

"It seems proper that we should devote a part of this, our first Convention, to the Society that has labored so untiringly for us among our human brothers and sisters," said Mr. Mockingbird. "I presume that you all know that the name of this Society is 'The Audubon Society,' and that its members work for the preservation of the beneficial birds, their nests and eggs. Through their efforts laws have been made all over the country giving us better protection and forbidding people to kill us or keep us in cages. Some thirty-seven States in the Union now have these Societies. The children, also, are banded together and it is most interesting and gratifying to us that there are so many boys who do not try to kill us. These children are taught about our food habits and know that without us the vegetation of the earth would be destroyed by insects and that human beings could not live.

"I am sure you all feel as I do about these bird lovers, but I should like an expression from you."

Instantly such a hubbub arose that the President had to call the assembly to order and beg the members not all to speak at once. Mr. Barn Owl seemed much excited, and when the President had succeeded in gaining order, he asked Mr. Owl what he had to say about the Audubon Society.

"Mr. Chairman and Friends": began solemn Mr. Owl, "I have nothing but the greatest praise for this estimable Society. I know what it means to be given



Mr. White-crowned Sparrow

protection. Had it not been for human friends, I should not have raised my family as I did the past year. We have a hole in an old sycamore tree not far from here which we have used for a nest for many years. The boys have always bothered us more or less, but a kind lady who lives near by has made them leave us alone, and this year she again came to our rescue. Two boys thought they would like one of my babies for a pet, and so they climbed up the tree, and tied a string around my baby's leg and fastened the other end to a branch, and then they climbed down and left my darling tied to the tree. For some reason they did not come back to get him, and, I suppose, would have left him to die in the tree had not the kind lady made them climb up and cut him loose."

"What a shame that they treated you so," came from a sympathetic neighbor.

"I am sure," said the Chairman, "as soon as the people realize how much good Mr. Barn Owl and his family do by catching gophers, mice, squirrels, etc., they will give them better protection and not allow their boys to molest them. I understand that they are considered most helpful to the farmers."

"Yes, this bird society has issued a Bulletin telling how much good the Owl family does; and there is a splendid likeness of Mr. Owl on the front page," said one of the birds.

When Mr. Owl had ceased his story, a tiny Humming-bird made such a buzzing above the audience that all heads were turned in her direction and eagerly they listened for what she had to say.

"Do you know," she began in a high-pitched voice, "that they have a Junior Society in our school and—" but she was checked in her story by exclamations of, "Your school?" "The idea!" "Where is it?" etc., and she explained by saying that she called it *her* school because she had her nest in the yard close by.

"In the school-yard, among all the children?" queried Mrs. Crow. "What a queer place."

"Yes, indeed, that was what I wanted to tell you about," said Mrs. Hummer.

"I built my nest on a pepper-branch only six feet from the ground and between the two playgrounds. It was the noisiest place in the whole yard."

"What ever made you do it?" asked suspicious Mrs. Jay.



Mrs. Black-chinned Hummer

"Well, I knew about this Bird Society for the children while I was about in the winter-time. Because they were so good to us. I learned to be very fond of them. I used to watch the boys play ball and the girls basket-ball and I became so fascinated with the games that I wanted my nest where I could watch. It robs brooding of its tediousness if one has something of great interest near at hand, you know."

"How ingenious Mrs. Hummer is," whispered one of the birds. "I never thought of that."

"The children found me when I first began to build," continued the tiny Humming-bird, "and they would stop their play and gather around to watch me. Their teacher would often be with them and

they called watching me their 'Nature Study lesson.' I tell you if you once get a party of children interested in you, you are pretty safe. They guarded me like policemen all through incubation and feeding time."

"Did you really raise your family in such an unsafe place?" asked Mr. Jay.

"Yes, indeed! There they are with me today," and she pointed to two other Humming-birds that were in the assembly.

"Mother is quite right," said one of them. "We were raised among those dear noisy children and we love them so much that we are going to raise our families there this next year."

"Well, well, I declare," ejaculated Mr. Jay. "Truly this is an age of wonders."

"The children in our school, who are all Audubonites," said Mrs. Linnet "have a bird-shelf outside one window and they keep food and a cup of water out for us all the time. We feed there and sometimes fly right into the room among them, and they are so pleased that the teacher lets them stop study and watch us."

"I guess you know when you have a good thing, Mrs. Linnet," said Mr. Jay.

"Indeed, we do! We also build our nest in plain sight and the children watch us and help us raise the babies by bringing food for us."

"My dear, I think we must hunt up that yard," said Mrs. Jay to her mate.

"Our family have every reason to love the Audubon Society," said Mr. Western Meadowlark. "It

was the Audubons who put us on the protected list and it is by their efforts that we are kept there."

"We, too, owe much to this Society," spoke up Mrs. Dove. "We are game birds, you know, on



Mrs. Hummer Feeding Babies

this Western Coast, and they used to hunt us in many places while our young were still in the nest, but because of the work of these bird-lovers the laws are gradually getting better and our babies are given more of a chance."

"That is good!" exclaimed several.

"Since we are of one mind in regard to these bird people, I wish we might do something to show our appreciation," said the Chairman.

"Human beings pass resolutions," said Mr. Blackbird, "but I hardly see what good that would

do, for none of us can talk or write English to let them know how we feel or what we have done."

"Perhaps Mrs. Pigeon could," said some one in the audience.

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Mocker.

"Well, there is a language they call Pigeon English."

This caused much amusement among the birds; also much mystification, as many present had never heard of this queer language, but Mrs. Pigeon put them all at ease by saying she knew nothing about this mode of speaking, and she felt sure that no mortal would understand her coo.

"I have an idea," said Mr. Owl, wisely.

"Do let us hear it," said Mr. Mocker.

"Well, the Secretary of the State Audubon Society lives only a short distance from here. I believe it will be fine to fly up there and serenade her."

"Glorious!" "Splendid!" "What a fine idea! Mr. Owl," came from the birds.

"Of course, I would not care to go in this bright sunlight," continued Mr. Owl, "but then I could only hoot anyway, and the bird lady might think that I was making fun of her."

And so it was agreed that the song-birds of the Assembly, headed by the Chairman, should go in a body to the yard and all sing their sweetest. There was great confusion as they flew from their perches and began to follow their leader.

"We will all go as quietly as possible and light in one of the big pepper-trees and then, when I give



Master and Miss Hummingbird

the signal, all sing your loudest and sweetest," said Mr. Mocker, as they flew away.

When they reached the yard, they were delighted to see the object of their journey lying in the hammock under one of the big pepper-trees in the yard. Silently they settled in the tree above her head and then with Mr. Mocker's first note they poured forth their glorious melody. Instantly the lady in the hammock was awakened, and exclaimed in delight at the sight of so many birds and their sweet music.

"Am I still dreaming?" she asked, as she looked up and beheld so many favorites. "There is a Chat, oh, isn't he beautiful—and there is a darling Thrush. Just hear his sweet song. What an exquisite voice that Kinglet has. And there is a Warbling Vireo, I do believe. And several Thrashers and Grosbeaks, and Orioles, and a gorgeous Western Tanager, and oh! so many others. Dear, dear, what can

it mean? I do believe the darlings are giving me a serenade." And with that idea she lay, almost breathless, lest she should scare them away or miss any of the glorious music. Several times she pinched herself to be sure that she was awake.

After about twenty minutes of this chorus, it ceased as quickly as it had begun, and led by the Mocker, the birds flew from the tree back to the Convention ground. As they disappeared, the lady raised in the hammock, and with rapture cried, "It was a serenade! Oh, my beauties!"



Mrs. Grosbeak's Son

CHAPTER IX.

FAREWELLS.

When the birds had again assembled in their Convention trees, Mr. Mocker called them to order and said as he knew some of them were anxious to be on their way, he believed the committees had better report before any one felt obliged to go. Then if there was time after the reports they would hold an informal reception.

He, therefore, called upon Mr. Thrasher, Chairman of the Place Committee, for his report.

"Mr. Chairman," began Mr. Thrasher, "Our committee has given the matter of a suitable meeting-place for another year, its careful consideration, and we have decided, for various reasons, that right here in the Arroyo Seco would be the best place. Not only is there running-water, large trees of many kinds, shrubs, underbrush, and vines—in fact everything that we birds enjoy, but, added to that, in this section of the country birds are given protection. We might find suitable localities where food-supplies would be abundant, but where our gatherings would be misunderstood, and small boys and even grown-ups, who are ignorant of our economic value, would make war against us. And so it seems best that we should let well enough alone and hold our next meeting here."

"What is the pleasure of the meeting?" asked the Chairman.

"I move the committee's report be accepted," said Mr. Blackbird.

"I second the motion," came from Mr. Towhee.

Upon the Chairman stating the motion and calling for a discussion upon it, Mr. Barn Owl said he had already expressed himself on the value of protection. In his estimation, all things considered, no better place could be found.

"I think this is a very suitable place," said Mr. W. Tanager. "I am sure it meets the requirements of us migrants. It is just a good resting-place for us on our Northern trip. We always want to rest a day or two somewhere, and this seems ideal to me."

"Me too," said Mr. Olive-sided Flycatcher, using the slang of the day.

There being no dissenting voice, the President put the question, which was unanimously carried.



Mr. Mockingbird's Son

"Now, as to spreading the news of the next Convention, I hope the members will not depend entirely upon the special committee appointed for that purpose. It would be impossible for it to circulate the news as widely as we wish, so please all of you who have enjoyed this meeting, tell all the birds you meet this year about it."

"Mr. President," said Mr. Barn Owl. "I think I voice the sentiment of this assembly when I say we owe you a vote of thanks."

"Yes, yes!" came from the audience.

"I, therefore, desire all of you who agree with me, to rise and give a ringing vote of thanks," continued Mr. Owl.

Instantly every bird was on his, or her, feet and in a loud voice, calling "Three cheers for Mr. Mockingbird!" which were given with heartiness and goodwill.

Mr. Mockingbird seemed much pleased with this tribute paid him, and began to thank them for their goodwill.

"The success of this Convention is due to those of you who have attended and responded so readily to calls for information and testimonies. I want to thank you all for—"

Mr. Mockingbird suddenly ceased speaking and those nearest him saw him glance upward and then with a wild, warning cry, he leaped from his perch and flew frantically into a near-by thicket. Instantly all the birds were paralyzed with fear, and the greatest confusion resulted. Such flying against each other, such screams and squeals as filled the air,

such turning of a peaceful, tranquil meeting into pandemonium was never before known in the bird-world. Wise Mr. Owl, who sat in a dark corner to one side was the only calm one. Instantly he knew he was beholding a "bird-man."

"Well, well, I declare, he does pretty well for a man. But he does make an awful noise and fuss about it. He can't sail along, unheard, as I do. I guess, though, it is just as well that he is so noisy for had he come quietly he would have landed on top of us."

In vain Mr. Owl tried to hoot and tell his companions that this "great bird" would not hurt them, that it was just a human being trying to fly, but he could not make himself heard above the din.

Finally, however, curiosity overcoming fear, one by one the birds came back and seeing that it was, indeed, only a man, once more order was restored and the convention brought to a harmonious ending.

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